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SUBJECT: THAILAND: CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE INSIDE THE
INSTITUTION OF THE MONARCHY IN KING BHUMIBOL'S TWILIGHT

REF: A. BANGKOK 2606 (KING HOSPITALIZATION UPDATE)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 2488 (KING HOSPITALIZED)
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 2746 (THAKSIN MANEUVERS)
[1](#)D. BANGKOK 2260 (PALACE OFFICIALS QUASH RUMORS)

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Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (S) Introduction and Comment: With King Bhumibol significantly weakened by a variety of ailments that have kept him hospitalized for two months (refs A-B), realization that the end of his 62-year reign may be drawing near has heightened speculation and rumors about what might come next for the Chakri dynasty. In the short-term, attention now focuses on whether Bhumibol will be physically able to preside over the annual King's Birthday military parade December 2. Bhumibol's eventual passing will be a watershed event in Thai history. It likely will unleash changes in institutional arrangements in Thailand, affecting the size and role of the monarchy, its relationship to the elected government and the military, and the roles of both of the latter, unmatched since the 1932 transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy, which nevertheless retained the monarchy at the core of Thai national identity.

[1](#)2. (C) The Thai institution of monarchy remains an opaque institution, full truths about which are difficult to fix with any certainty. While many observers often refer to the Thai monarchy as if it were a unified, coherent institution, and use "the Palace" as short-hand in the same way "the White House" or "10 Downing Street" is employed as a metaphor for a clearly defined and located nexus of power, neither description is particularly appropriate in the current Thai context.

[1](#)3. (S) There are in fact multiple circles of players and influence surrounding the Thai royal family, often times with little overlap but with competing agendas, fueled by years of physical separation and vacillating relationships between principals. Separate centers of influence/players focus around: King Bhumibol; Queen Sirikit; Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn; Princess Sirindhorn; and the Privy Council, though the latter has less access/influence than many suppose. In addition, there are supporting bureaucratic entities such as the Office of Principal Private Secretary, the Royal Household Bureau, the Crown Property Bureau, and

the Privy Purse, which employ thousands and manage assets in the billions, as well as a bevy of minor royals whose motorcades routinely clog Bangkok's roads.

14. (S) As with royal courts of old, rumors and alleged machinations abound--two enduring purported "shockers" in 2009 have involved supposed negotiations between representatives of Thaksin and "the Palace," and stories of a supposed "December surprise" involving an abdication announcement. Neither ever seemed likely to us. Such claims and other royal rumint should be assessed in the context of the legal norms of the institution and the personal relationships between principals and marginal players. Many figures in the various circles attempt to appropriate the charisma of the King and prestige of the royal institution for their own purposes without any official remit, a process known in Thai as "ang barami."

15. (S) This is the first of two cables taking an extended look at the players and elements affecting the dynamics and implications of royal succession, both before and after King Bhumibol's death; septel will examine succession scenarios and implications for Thailand and U.S. policy. We offer this "royal primer" mindful of the opaque nature of the institution, the difficulty in establishing absolute truths about public yet very remote royal figures, and the inherent biases of inside players, even those we have known for years (several of whom recently repeated a Thai aphorism about the institution: "those who know aren't talking, and those who are talking aren't in the know").

16. (C) This assessment draws on Embassy institutional knowledge and understanding based on the observations of royal watchers, both Thai and expat, over the past several

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decades, as well as our interaction with many of the secondary and more marginal players in the various circles described. Most informed observers expect the transition period associated with royal succession and institutional redefinition to last at least five years; the cast of characters and key players will likely change significantly after succession, particularly when/if the Crown Prince becomes King. End Introduction and Comment.

The King's Dwindling Circle of Men (and Women)

17. (C) Cambridge, Massachusetts-born King Bhumibol Adulyadej turns 82 December 5, by many accounts beset long-term by Parkinson's, depression, and chronic lower back pain, and short-term by an extended brush with pneumonia in September-October that caused him to lose weight and, for now, be wheelchair bound (refs A-B). As a result, his current companions are most likely to be doctors and physio-therapists from Siriraj hospital, along with his second daughter Princess Sirindhorn, who often seems to act as his defacto personal assistant, and Queen Sirikit.

18. (S) Until relatively recently, it was much different. The King has lived nearly all of the past decade at his seaside Klai Kangwon Palace (appropriately titled "Far from Worries") in Hua Hin, having abandoned habitual residence in Bangkok in 2000 as his health worsened. Queen Sirikit only rejoined him full time in Hua Hin in mid-2008, concerned about his declining health and with an eye towards more firmly managing the transition to come. Prior to mid-2008, the King and Queen had lived most of the past 20 years largely apart, joint public appearances excepted. This unpublicized reality started after the Queen disappeared from public view in 1986 for about six months to recover from emotional exhaustion, in the wake of the King dismissing her favorite military aide de camp. Their social circles diverged sharply from then on, with very few figures spanning both camps.

19. (S) The King's decade-long sojourn in Hua Hin starting in 2000 significantly limited the amount of interaction he had

not only with the Queen but also those whom many outsiders (incorrectly) presume spend significant amounts of time with him: Privy Councilors; as well as officials of the office of the Principal Private Secretary, all of whom are Bangkok-based and do not have regular access to the King. That limited access apparently has not changed during the ongoing hospitalization in Bangkok, with M.R. Thep Devakul the only Privy Councilor allowed into the King's room, and that solely by virtue of his being a cousin of the Queen.

¶10. (C) Those few whose counsel the King has sought in recent years, according to various sources, are neither household names nor political players, but associated with his charitable development foundations or his closest staff. These include the sharp-tongued Thanphuying Butrie Viravaidya, his deputy Principal Private Secretary (DPPS) and wife of NGO activist Meechai "the Condom King" (Butrie is currently ensconced at Siriraj Hospital); Wud Sumitra, another DPPS; Sumete Tantivejkul, head of the Chai Patana Foundation; Disathorn Watcharothai, Chair of the Rajanukh Rao Foundation and son of the Lord Chamberlain; and Pramote Maiklap, former director of the Royal Irrigation Department. The Privy Councilor closest to the King is likely Air Chief Marshal Kamthorn Sidhvananda, former long-time head of State Electricity Giant EGAT, whom the King credits for electrifying much of rural Thailand. His most regular social interaction in recent years came in weekly late-Saturday night jam sessions with his pick-up jazz band, whose geriatric members have played with the King for decades.

¶11. (C) Inner circle proximity to the King may ultimately mean little when it comes to influence/impact, however. In the late 2008 political crisis caused by the occupation of Government House, and ultimately Bangkok's airports, by the yellow-shirt PAD activists claiming to be defending the monarchy, both Sumete and Disathorn joined Princess Sirindhorn in October 2008 in publicly stating that the King did not consider the yellow-shirts to be acting on his behalf. Disathorn went so far as to tell a seminar: "if you

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love the King, go home." Instead, PAD leader Sondhi Lim denounced both men from the PAD stage with curses; Sondhi repeated his criticism of Disathorn at the November 15 PAD rally. For her part, "Mom Butrie" has been known for years as an outspoken opponent of Thaksin and the Crown Prince, both of whom are reputed to regard her as their "enemy number one" within the King's circle. Despite relying on Mom Butrie for general advice and Princess Sirindhorn for assistance, however, all indications are that the King is unwavering in his insistence that the Crown Prince succeed him.

The Queen's Women (and Men)

¶12. (S) As the King withdrew from Bangkok-based public life over the past decade, Queen Sirikit rose in prominence, and she is expected by most to play a crucial role in the succession transition, before and after the King's passing. The Queen long maintained an active social life, with her tradition of twice weekly dinners that would start near midnight and last to dawn only ending with her move to Hua Hin. Based mainly out of Bangkok's Chitralada Palace, she regularly spent extended stretches at palaces in the north (Chiang Mai), the deep south (Narathiwat) and the northeast (Sakon Nakhon) through 2004, years after the King stopped his provincial travels. A 1994 Puma helicopter crash tragically robbed Sirikit of her most valued and respected advisers who could steer her away from trouble.

¶13. (S) The ladies-in-waiting who are left, the closest of which are Thanphuying Charungjit Teekara, head of the Queen's Support Foundation, and Thanphuying Chatkaew Nandhabiwat, appear to reinforce the Queen's tendency to be more nationalistic than the King. Those sentiments have led her astray in forays into political issues in recent years, both her attitudes towards the Malay Muslim deep south/promotion

of Buddhism as the constitutionally- enshrined state religion in 2006-07, and the 2008 People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) yellow-shirt protests. The latter culminated in her disastrous decision to attend the October 13, 2008 funeral of a young female PAD supporter killed by a police tear-gas grenade, a move universally seen as dragging the monarchy, which is supposed to remain above politics, into the partisan fray.

¶14. (S) The men currently closest to the Queen include GEN Prayuth Chanocha, Army deputy Commander and expected successor to GEN Anupong as the country's most powerful military figure as of October 2010; and Grand Chamberlain/head of the Crown Property Bureau Chirayu Israngkul. Apart from cousin M.R. Thep Devakul, the Privy Councilor closest to the Queen is Palagorn Suwanrath. Two others in her inner circle as recently as early 2009--businessman Piya Malakul and deputy Royal Aide de camp GEN Naphol Boonthap, have now been largely pushed aside with the Queen's assent, though not entirely out of her outer orbits. Charungjit and Chatkaew (in the case of Piya) and Prayuth (with Naphol) intervened, after the Queen accepted the views of her closest associates that Piya and Naphol had damaged her standing due to their freelancing/claims to act on her behalf -- Piya vis-a-vis the PAD, and Naphol, who oversees a Village Defense Force (VDF) project associated with the June 8 mosque massacre in the south.

¶15. (S) For many years, Queen Sirikit actively promoted Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn's interests and was seen as his greatest backer in the face of widespread public opposition and open preference for Princess Sirindhorn. For instance, she was the driving force behind the Crown Prince's 2003 trip to Washington, which she intended as a cornerstone effort to rehabilitate his image in the eyes of the Thai people as an acceptable future King, one who had recently remarried and would soon produce an acknowledged male heir.

¶16. (S) The mother-son relationship suddenly changed in 2007 for two reasons: the appearance of video and still photos of Vajiralongkorn's wife Srirasmi in the nude on the internet/CDs then widely available in Bangkok; and a noisy row over the amount of time the Crown Prince was spending outside Thailand. In 2008, the Queen and the Crown Prince

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had a shouting match at a hospital during the Queen's brief hospitalization, with the Crown Prince angrily berating her in front of ladies-in-waiting. Relations were further strained in late 2009 over the Police Chief struggle, with the Queen, supporting Acting Police Chief Pratheep, telling the Crown Prince to back off his support of GEN Chumpol, and he defiantly refusing to do so. Several of the key ladies-in-waiting reportedly now refuse to be present when the Crown Prince visits the Queen.

The Crown Prince's Men (and Girls)

¶17. (S) Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn has spent most (up to 75%) of the past two years based in Europe (primarily at a villa at a medicinal spa 20km outside of Munich), with his leading mistress and beloved white poodle Fufu. Vajiralongkorn is believed to be suffering from a blood-related medical condition (varying sources claim he is either: HIV positive; has Hepatitis C; is afflicted by a rare form of "blood cancer," or some combination which leads to regular blood transfusions). His current (third) wife Srirasmi and 4 year old son Adityadornkitigun, known as Ong Ti, reside in his Sukhothai Palace in Bangkok, but when Vajiralongkorn travels back to Bangkok, he stays with his second mistress in the retrofitted Air Force VIP lounge at Wing Six, Don Muang Airport (note: both mistresses are Thai Airways stewardesses; the Crown Prince has shifted from flying F5s to Thai Airways Boeings and Airbuses in recent years. End note). Long known for violent and unpredictable mood swings, the Crown Prince has few people who have stayed

long in his inner circle.

¶18. (S) One key exception: boarding school classmate Nippon Promphan, who has long tended to the Crown Prince's finances/affairs at the palace and recently resigned as PM Abhisit's Chief of Staff due to the spat between Abhisit and the Crown Prince over the Police Chief selection. Nippon is widely tipped to be the likely next Privy Council Chair, presuming Vajiralongkorn assumes the throne and cleans house.

A relatively new close associate and princely financier is banned former Thai Rak Thai politician Anutin Charnvirakul, son of Interior Minister/Phumjai Thai Chair Charavat, and executive of the Sino-Thai construction conglomerate. Deputy Police Commander Chumpol (see above) reportedly served for many years as then PM Thaksin's bagman, delivering funds skimmed from lottery proceeds to the Crown Prince and his staff; more recently, Chumpol is alleged to have been the conduit for Thaksin to "gift" a \$9 million villa in Phuket to the Crown Prince. Patsri Bunnag and her French husband Jean-Michel often accompany the Crown Prince on buying trips through Europe.

¶19. (S) Currently, the Chakri dynasty has but two eligible male heirs: Vajiralongkorn and his young son Ong Ti, who appears to suffer from both physical and mental developmental delay issues and reportedly has regular seizures. Rumors started flying in late 2009 that the Crown Prince might have facilitated the return to Thailand of his oldest, disinherited son Chudhavajra Polprasert, born of his eventual second wife Yuwatida when she was 16 and he was still married to his first wife, Princess Somsowali. Chudhavajra is known to have resided in Florida for over a decade. Rumor has it that he obtained a pilot's license and supposedly is now flying for Bangkok Airways or Thai Airways after a successful "second family" reunion this past summer in Europe. Rumint aside, there has been no public acknowledgment of Chudhavajra's supposed presence, which could alter succession dynamics (septel). As a sign of the Vajiralongkorn's fickleness, the Crown Prince recently returned to Europe, leaving Srirasmi and little Ong Ti to preside at the November 15 royally-sponsored wedding reception of Nippon's daughter.

Princess Sirindhorn's Circle

¶20. (S) Known to most Thai as "Pratthep" (angel, a term from her formal title), Princess Sirindhorn is often mistakenly referred to as the "Crown Princess" in English, even though there can only be one crown heir (it is Vajiralongkorn), and

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Palace law does not allow for female monarchs. A professor of U.S. studies, among other topics, at Chulachomklao, the Thai version of West Point, Sirindhorn is clearly the most beloved Thai royal after the King, bears the lion's share of royal duties/ceremonies at this point, and serves her father in such personal tasks as recently interviewing and hiring a physio-therapist for him. However, her influence is actually quite limited, and her future most uncertain. A majority of royal watchers we have talked to, including many who know her well, predict she will quietly leave the country once her father passes, for both the stability of the country and her own personal safety, leaving the Thai stage to her brother.

¶21. (C) Sirindhorn's closest aides are a long-serving, stable group, starting with Passinee Limathakul and Valliya Pangsrivongse, the two daughters of Pong Sarasin (Note: Pong served as the Thai nominal owner of the share transaction which allowed fugitive former PM Thaksin to sell his company to Singapore sovereign wealth firm Temasek. End note). Another close aide, Tirawat "Ting" Sucharitakul, previously spent 20 years working outside Thailand at UNHCR and most recently got himself entangled in Thaksin's "Swedish channel" of negotiations, apparently representing no one beyond himself (ref C). Two final close associates are Thanphuying Araya Pibulnakarin, her Secretary, and Dr. Prapod

Assavairuthakarn, Sirindhorn's college classmate, currently Dean of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Arts.

The Privy Council - less than meets the eye?

122. (SBU) The Privy Council is comprised of 19 elderly men, ranging in age from their mid-60s up to early 90s, who serve at the pleasure of the King. Statutorily they exist to offer advice to the King if he solicits it, review petitions on his behalf, act as ceremonial stand-ins for the King at various royally-sponsored ceremonies, and play a critical role in succession. One-third were flag-ranked officers; a third were Supreme Court justices, and a third were high ranking civil servants, particularly in development fields. Three spent an additional stint as PM (Prem, Thanin, Surayud). All have spent their entire adult lives in sworn service to King Bhumibol, both before and after retirement at age 60.

123. (C) Privy Council Chair GEN Prem Tinsulanonda, PM from 1980-88, has a special title as senior statesman last held in the early 1940s by Pridi. Prem has parlayed his stature into a series of board chairmanships and enduring influence in military reshuffle lists, drawing criticism from many quarters for engaging in inappropriate "ang barami" - borrowing the charisma of the monarch. Because of their presumptive encouragement for the 2006 coup that removed Thaksin from office, Prem and post-coup interim PM Surayud Chulanont have been particular targets of Thaksin and the red-shirts' ire, as part of the red "throw the aristocrat-bureaucrats out" campaign. The spring 2009 red protests called for Prem to resign; in the fall 2009, red-shirts demanded that the Constitution be changed so that the Privy Council Chair could not serve as Regent during the King's incapacitation. One Privy Council member red-shirt leaders have told us they do respect: long-time FM (under Prem) ACM Sitthi Savetsila.

124. (C) Yet the Privy Council plays a far smaller role than the red-shirts claim and many presume. Privy Councilors have only sporadic direct access to the King and can only offer advice or proposals if the King requests it, as several Privy Councilors have told us in the past year. Of note, GEN Prem is not particularly close to the King, as it turns out. While the Embassy has seen many instances of this over the years, perhaps the most notable came during the December 2006 visit to Thailand of former President George H.W. Bush. When King Bhumibol offered to host a dinner for former President and Barbara Bush, Prem did not make the initial guest list drawn up by the Royal Household Bureau on the King's behalf, despite having worked with the former President as Thai PM from 1980-88. One moment when the Privy Council will play a crucial role is in succession: once the King dies, the Privy Council is charged with forwarding the name of the named crown heir to parliament for endorsement as the next King.

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Office of the Principal Private Secretary (PPS)

125. (C) The Office of the Principal Private Secretary employs about 200 staff operating out of the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

Its formal roles include preparing paperwork to be signed by the King, who endorses all passed legislation and high-ranking government/military/police appointments, reviewing petitions to the King (aided occasionally by the six former Supreme Court justices on the Privy Council), and supporting foreign guests of the King/Queen. The current PPS, Arsa Sarasin, younger brother of Pong, has long made clear his desire to leave the position to focus on managing his family's business, but he serves at the pleasure of the King. Arsa, his predecessor Bhira, and his deputy Krit all served as diplomats -- and all as Ambassadors to the U.S. Krit, in turn, is known as one of "Prem's boys," having served as the MFA's PM liaison/interpreter for Prem's entire PM stint.

¶26. (C) The Office of the PPS does not have clear lines of authority, with certain employees' informal roles/influence more significant, such as Mom Butrie's, than their titles might suggest. Another such informal player is the Queen's foreign liaison officer within the OPPS, M.L. Anuporn "Joe" Kashemsant, son of the King's now deceased cardiologist and the former National Counter Corruption Commissioner, Thanphuying Preeya, who indicted Thaksin on a false assets declaration in 2000 and is a regular at the Queen's dinner table. Once the number of the Queen's foreign visitors slowed dramatically in recent years, Anuporn started freelancing more in political intrigues.

Royal Household Bureau, Crown Property Bureau, Privy Purse

¶27. (C) The Royal Household Bureau (RHB), led by the nearly senile 80 year old Lord Chamberlain Gaewkhwan Watcharothai and run out of the Grand Palace, employs several thousand staff to run the day-to-day support of the King/Queen and the upkeep of various palaces used by the King and Queen. A childhood school friend of the King, Gaewkhwan has largely withdrawn from day-to-day management of the RHB, allowing his two sons to run the show. The Privy Purse, directed by MIT grad Pinyo Ekarapanich, manages King Bhumibol's personal property holdings/finances, distinct from the wider holdings of the institution of monarchy (see next para).

¶28. (C) The Crown Property Bureau (CPB), run by Gaewkhwan's deputy, the Grand Chamberlain Chirayu, employs between 100-200 people to manage the extensive property and portfolio holdings of the Crown and generate income to support the monarchy and various members. When Forbes magazine claims that King Bhumibol is the world's richest monarch, valuing him at \$35 billion, they fix that number by applying commercial real estate rates to the declared CPB holdings, even though the majority of CPB holdings are likely never to fall in that category. Finding a balance between a better rate of return and the wider interests of the monarchy can be tricky, since much of the CPB's real estate is occupied by non rent-paying schools, hospitals, and government buildings on the one hand, and small urban Bangkok businessmen on the other, with the latter figuring among the institution's most fervent supporters. The CPB holdings are certainly a prize which then PM Thaksin and his team eyed while in office from 2001-06, believing they could "unlock value" if given managerial control.

Minor Royals - Ceremonies and traffic jamming motorcades

¶29. (C) A number of other minor royals continue to perform ceremonies and clog traffic with motorcades that routinely shut down exresays and major arteries on every trip to go shopping or play badminton, to the great annoyance of Bangkokians. Of most importance is Princess Soamsawali, the Queen's niece and Crown Prince's first wife. The Queen engineered Soamsawali's formal return to the royal family in 2003, as a counter-balance to the emergence of Srirasmi as the Crown Prince's new wife. Soamsawali currently bears the second heaviest load of royal ceremonies after Sirindhorn.

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Her daughter, the Crown Prince's first child, Princess Bajrakitiyabha (known as Ong Ba), who received a Cornell law degree, has enjoyed an increasingly high profile and a reputation for being perhaps the sharpest of the royal family members. Ong Ba works as a provincial prosecutor in Udon Thani; she is currently taking additional courses at John Jay College in New York.

¶30. (C) The King's youngest child, Princess Chulaporn, suffers from Lupus, and has cut down her appearances domestically in recent years, but travels extensively in Europe, where she receives medical treatment; her two daughters also contribute to traffic jams. The King's first child, daughter Ubonrat (often incorrectly referred to as "Princess" in English), returned to Thailand and the Bangkok

social scene in 2001 after 25 years as a Californian housewife and a divorce from a fellow MIT grad. However, the King chose not to restore Ubonrat's royal title of Princess, which he stripped after she married against his wishes. Princess Sirivannavari, the Crown Prince's second daughter, from his second ex-wife Yuwatida (currently residing in Florida), is informally known as the "Fashion Princess" for her fashion design interests; she is currently working at the MFA in advance of a European posting as a "fashion liaison" to Paris and Milan.

Interpreting Royal Rumint - 3 brief case studies

¶31. (S) "The Swedish gambit" - Several times in 2009 Thaksin has tried to advance "negotiations" with various figures affiliated in some way with the monarchy via Swedish associates. He apparently hoped to leverage the prestige of the institution of monarchy to pressure the Democrat-led government to cut a deal with him to return his frozen assets, drop criminal charges, and allow his return to Thailand; what he offered in return was never clear. However, Deputy PPS Krit told us in September that PPS Arsa continually shut down such feelers from Thaksin's camp to various figures in palace circles (ref D). Two individuals mentioned as interlocutors who have confirmed the Swedish talks with us -- Sirindhorn adviser Tirawat and Queen liaison officer Anuporn -- appear to have been freelancing, without authority to speak for anyone beyond themselves or deliver on any package deal, something Thaksin and his Swedish intermediaries apparently did not realize (ref C).

¶32. (S) "The December surprise" - there was a flurry of late October rumors, as the King's hospitalization stretched into its second month, of a possible announcement by the King in the anticipated annual Birthday speech (traditionally delivered December 4) that he would abdicate. One version had it in favor of the Crown Prince, a second for a Queen Regency on behalf of Ong Ti. Abdication rumors started mid-year, sourced (as best we can tell) out of the Crown Prince's circle and often repeated by red-shirts and those close to Thaksin, but without any confirmatory indication inside palace circles. The downturn in the King's health led many to wonder if insiders might change their mind.

¶33. (S) Yet the story seemed far-fetched for many reasons: Prem had indicated mid-October to Dutch diplomats that it was unlikely the King would deliver a birthday speech this year due to his health; the King has never shown an inclination to abdicate, knowing it sets a perilous precedent for a dynasty with an unpopular heir and uncertain future bloodlines; the only person with any stature to raise such an issue with the King would be the Queen, whose current views about the Crown Prince remain obscured; the Queen's associates with standing to forcefully raise such a delicate yet momentous issue with her are long dead; and it would take more than a month to prepare the country for an abdication decision--red-shirt leader Vira Musikapong, in dismissing the rumint, told us six months' minimum. (note: with an apparent upturn in the King's health, the rumors died down after a week).

¶34. (S) "No intermediaries" - Even Thai relatively close to royal principals treat purported wishes conveyed by other royal associates with caution, given the tradition of self-serving "ang barami." One charismatic, divisive figure

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once very close to the Queen, but no longer, is Thanphuying Viraya, a prodigious fund-raiser who was also Thaksin's chief agent of influence in palace circles until she was expelled circa 2003. When NCCC Commissioner Preeya was preparing to indict Thaksin for his false asset declaration in late 2000, on the eve of his first electoral victory, Viraya claimed to Preeya that Queen Sirikit wanted her to back off the indictment. The message was reinforced by the Crown Prince, who verbally threatened Preeya in front of ladies-in-waiting. Shaken, Preeya sought an audience directly with the Queen,

who told her to ignore what she had heard from others and do what was right based on the evidence in the case. Nine years later, Preeya's son Anuporn told us the Queen conveyed a similar message to PM Abhisit and DPM Suthep in late summer in regards to ensuring accountability for the June 8 mosque massacre, in the face of concern about the connection of the suspects to her aide de camp GEN Naphol: do what is right based on the evidence and legal norms.

JOHN